NOTES ON DAILY COMMUNION

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.

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NOTES ON DAILY COMMUNION

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SYDNEY SMITH, S.J.,
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WESTMONASTERII,
Die 2 Feb., 1907.

NOTES

ON

DAILY COMMUNION

BY

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

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PATERNAL MESSAGE FROM H.H. POPE PIUS X.

THE Author, having been allowed the privilege of presenting a copy of the First Edition of these "Notes" to the Holy Father, received in return a gracious message from His Holiness, conveyed in a letter from H.E., The Cardinal Secretary of State, of which the following is an extract:

"REVEREND FATHER,

"Together with your letter, which reached me on the fourteenth of this month, I received the two copies of your devout work on daily approach to the Holy Table. I hastened to place in the hands of His Holiness the copy intended for him. Hence, you will easily understand how pleasant a task it is for me to tell your reverence of the praise accorded you by the Sovereign Pontiff. He declares that he is grateful, not only because you have presented to him a dutiful gift, but also because, by means of the said work, you have singularly furthered the aims of the decree concerning the daily reception of the Eucharist, published two years ago by the Sacred Congregation of the Council. It is no less a pleasure for me to add, moreover, that His Holiness, in testimony of his gratitude and approval, has imparted to you, in a special and most fatherly manner, the Apostolic Benediction. . .

. . . . . .

"Yours sincerely and devotedly,

"R. CARD. MERRY DEL VAL.

"ROME,

"*March* 22, 1907."

INDEX OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION OF DECREE ON "FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION"	9
INTRODUCTION: ROME LEADS UP TO THE DECREE ON FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION OF DECEMBER 20, 1905	17
DECREE I. ON FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION:	
I. SUBSTANCE OF PREAMBLE TO DECREE	24
II. SALIENT POINTS	26
III. RULES FOR DAILY COMMUNION, WITH OBSERVATIONS	35
DECREE II. PRIVILEGE AS TO THE WEEKLY CONFESSION FOR GAINING PLENARY INDULGENCES	50
DECREE III. YOUNGER CHILDREN AND DAILY COMMUNION	53
DECREE IV. NON-FASTING COMMUNION FOR INVALIDS	63
THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH AND DAILY COMMUNION	66
SAINTS AND SPIRITUAL WRITERS ON FREQUENT COMMUNION	69
DIFFICULTIES CONSIDERED	70
APPENDIX I. FURTHER REPLY ABOUT NON-FASTING COMMUNION	80
APPENDIX II. ROME'S FRESH IMPULSE TO FREQUENT COMMUNION: CORPUS CHRISTI DEVOTIONS	82
APPENDIX III. FREQUENT COMMUNION AND SCHOOL HOLIDAYS	87

DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF THE COUNCIL ON RECEIVING DAILY THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST.

THE Council of Trent, having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace which are offered to the faithful who receive the Most Holy Eucharist, makes the following declaration : "The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate, not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally, by the actual reception of the Eucharist" (Sess. XXII., cap. vi.). Which words declare plainly enough the wish of the Church that all Christians should be daily nourished by this heavenly banquet, and should derive therefrom abundant fruit for their sanctification.

And this wish of the Council is in entire agreement with that desire wherewith Christ our Lord was inflamed when He instituted this Divine Sacrament. For He Himself more than once, and in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the necessity of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, especially in these words : "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven ; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead : he that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 59). Now, from this comparison of the food of angels with bread and with the manna, it was easily to be under-

stood by His disciples that, as the body is daily nourished with bread, and as the Hebrews were daily nourished with manna in the desert, so the Christian soul might daily partake of this heavenly bread, and be refreshed thereby. Moreover, whereas in the Lord's Prayer we are bidden to ask for "our daily bread," the holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words must be understood, not so much that material bread which is the support of the body as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food.

Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable; so that its primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients (St. Augustine, Serm. 57 in St. Matth., "De Orat. Dom.," N. 7). Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins" (Sess. XIII., cap. ii.).

This desire on the part of God was so well understood by the first Christians that they daily flocked to the holy table as to a source of life and strength. "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread" (Acts ii. 42). And that this practice was continued into later ages, not without great fruit of holiness and

perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness.

But when in later times piety grew cold, and more especially under the influence of the plague of Jansenism, disputes began to arise concerning the dispositions with which it was proper to receive Communion frequently or daily ; and writers vied with one another in imposing more and more stringent conditions as necessary to be fulfilled. The result of such disputes was that very few were considered worthy to communicate daily, and to derive from this most healing Sacrament its more abundant fruits, the rest being content to partake of it once a year, or once a month, or at the utmost weekly. Nay, to such a pitch was rigorism carried that whole classes of persons were excluded from a frequent approach to the holy table; for instance, those who were engaged in trade, or even *those who were living in the state of matrimony.*

Others, however, went to the opposite extreme. Under the persuasion that daily Communion was a Divine precept, and in order that no day might pass without the reception of the Sacrament, besides other practices contrary to the approved usage of the Church, they held that the Holy Eucharist ought to be received, and in fact administered it, even on Good Friday.

Under these circumstances the Holy See did not fail in its duty of vigilance, for by a decree of this Sacred Congregation, which begins with the words *Cum ad aures*, issued on February 12, A.D. 1679, with the approbation of Innocent XI., it condemned these errors, and put a stop to such abuses, at the same time declaring that all the faithful of whatsoever class—merchants or tradesmen or married persons not excepted—might be admitted to frequent Communion,

according to the devotion of each one and the judgment of his confessor. And on December 7, 1690, by the decree of Pope Alexander VIII., *Sanctissimus Dominus*, the proposition of Baius, postulating a perfectly pure love of God, without any admixture of defect, as requisite on the part of those who wished to approach the holy table, was condemned.

Yet the poison of Jansenism, which, under the pretext of showing due honour and reverence to the Holy Eucharist, had infected the minds even of good men, did not entirely disappear. The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for the lawful and laudable frequentation of the Sacrament survived the declarations of the Holy See; so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the faithful ones in rare cases, and under many conditions.

On the other hand, there were not wanting men of learning and piety who more readily granted permission for this practice, so salutary and so pleasing to God. In accordance with the teaching of the Fathers, they maintained that there was no precept of the Church which prescribed more perfect dispositions in the case of daily than of weekly or monthly Communion; while the good effects of daily Communion would, they alleged, be far more abundant than those of Communion received weekly or monthly.

In our own day the controversy has been carried on with increased warmth, and not without bitterness, so that the minds of confessors and the consciences of the faithful have been disturbed, to the no small detriment of Christian piety and devotion. Accordingly, certain distinguished men, themselves pastors of souls, have urgently besought His Holiness Pope Pius X. to

deign to settle, by his supreme authority, the question concerning the dispositions requisite for daily Communion ; so that this usage, so salutary and so pleasing to God, might not only suffer no decrease among the faithful, but might rather be promoted and everywhere propagated—a thing most desirable in these days, when religion and the Catholic faith are attacked on all sides, and the true love of God and genuine piety are so lacking in many quarters. And His Holiness, being most earnestly desirous, out of his abundant solicitude and zeal, that the faithful should be invited to partake of the sacred banquet as often as possible, and even daily, and should profit to the utmost by its fruits, committed the aforesaid question to this Sacred Congregation, to be looked into and decided once for all (*definiendum*).

Accordingly, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a Plenary Session held on December 16, 1905, submitted the whole matter to a very careful scrutiny ; and, after sedulously examining the reasons adduced on either side, determined and declared as follows :

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life ; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the holy table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this : that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless, it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future; and, if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone (*ne quemquam avertant*) from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace and approaches with a right intention.

6. But since it is plain that by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (Part II., cap. iv.,

N. 60)—are frequently, and with great zeal, to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted, especially in religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds ; with regard to which, however, the decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on December 17, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar ; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth.

8. In the case of religious institutes, whether of solemn or simple vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as *directive* and not *preceptive*. In such cases the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious. Therefore, freedom of access to the Eucharistic table, whether more frequently or daily, must always be allowed them, according to the principles above laid down in this decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may clearly understand the provisions of this decree, the Superior of each house is to see that it is read in community, in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions requisite for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness Pope Pius X. by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred

Congregation in an audience held on December 17, 1905, His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present decree, and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all local ordinaries and regular prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes, and priests; and that in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.

✠ VINCENT, Card. Bishop of Palestrina,
Prefect.

Cajetan De Lai, *Secretary.*

L. ✠ S.

NOTES ON
DAILY COMMUNION

To those who in recent times had carefully noted the successive manifestations of the mind of Rome with regard to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, it must have been tolerably clear that, ere long, definite and authoritative instructions would be given to the faithful concerning the practice of frequent and daily Communion.

As far back as 1866 Pius IX. had condemned the economizing of Sacraments in the case of children. On March 12 of that year Cardinal Antonelli, the Papal Secretary of State, addressed a letter in the Pope's name to several French Bishops on the necessity of adopting right standards as to admitting children to Holy Communion. After animadverting upon some other irregularities in this matter, the Cardinal proceeds: "Even after they (the children) have been admitted to their first Communion, it is customary to keep them from the Sacrament,

forbidding them access—as is done in places—at the Easter following upon their Communion. Lastly, there are seminaries, even, where the usage obtains of withholding young students from the Sacrament of the Altar for several months, on the pretext of giving opportunity for riper preparation.

"Knowing, therefore, the importance of the Sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist for protecting and sustaining the innocence of children—knowing how wonderfully the frequent use of the Sacraments contributes towards nourishing and confirming the beginnings of piety in their hearts, which are by this means led to take up fervently the practices of our holy religion, the Holy Father, in his anxiety to see altered a method so unenlightened and so injurious to the interests of children, has charged me with the duty of calling your lordships' attention to the said abuse, in order to secure that this system of spiritual treatment of children shall be reformed in a sense more conformable with the spirit and discipline of the Church."

The mind of the Holy See once more plainly declared itself by the mouth of Leo XIII. In his splendid encyclical on the Holy Eucharist, issued on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 1902, the late Pontiff left us—almost as his last will and testament—some golden words concerning our Saviour's dying legacy of love:

"It was towards the close of His mortal life that Christ our Lord left this memorial of His

measureless love for men—this powerful means of support 'for the life of the world.' And precisely for this reason We, being so soon to depart this life, can wish for nothing better than that it may be granted to Us to stir up and foster in the hearts of all men the disposition of mindful gratitude and due devotion towards this wonderful Sacrament."

Again: "But the chief aim of our efforts must be that *the frequent reception of the Eucharist may be everywhere revived among Catholic people.* For this is the lesson which is taught us by the example of the primitive Church, by the decrees of Councils, by the authority of the Fathers and holy men in all ages. . . . *Accordingly, all prejudices to the contrary, all those vain fears to which so many yield, and their specious excuses for abstaining from the Holy Eucharist, must be wholly put aside*" [penitus tollendæ].

In the above forcible words of our late Holy Father we have the answer to a possible difficulty: "How is it that the Church has only awoke at this eleventh hour to the importance of frequent Communion? This advocacy of frequent Communion is a new thing." Clearly it is no new thing. The Church has "by decrees of Councils, by the authority of the Fathers and holy men in all ages," taught the immense importance of the practice. But those "prejudices," those "vain fears," those "specious excuses," have to a large extent hindered the faithful from learning the lesson as they should.

A contrary practice—as the decree of December, 1905, tells us—has "survived the declarations of the Holy See."

In 1900, Leo XIII. had already expressed his mind in similar terms in a Brief addressed to Père Coubé, S.J., a zealous champion of Frequent Communion. "Those who are labouring to strengthen the faith and to reform morals are well advised when they make it their endeavour to exhort the faithful to approach the Holy Table as often as possible; for the more frequently one receives this Holy Sacrament, the more abundant are the fruits of holiness derived therefrom."*

In February, 1905, our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., caused to be issued an indulgenced prayer "For the spread of the practice of daily Communion." In this devout petition the suppliant is made to entreat our Divine Lord in these terms: "Pour out Thy Divine Spirit in order that . . . those who, through Thy gift, are already living the divine life of grace may, when able, devoutly approach Thy Holy Table *daily*. So that, receiving through *daily* Communion the remedy for their daily venial sins, and nourishing in themselves *day by day* the life of Thy grace, and thus ever purifying their souls more and more, they may at length be united in securing the life of the blessed with Thee."

The fact that this prayer has been sanctioned

* Lintelo: "Lettres sur la Communion Fréquente." Tournai, 1905, pp. 116, 117.

by the Holy Father would of itself suffice to prove his own ardent desire to see daily Communion propagated amongst his children. But the grant of an indulgence (300 days) once a day for the devout use of the prayer made it still more plain that the Holy See purported to lead Catholics back as far as possible to primitive Eucharistic practice. The decided step taken by our Holy Father in that direction is but one more application of the motto which he publicly adopted upon ascending the pontifical throne : *Instaurare omnia in Christo*—" To renew all things in Christ."

Besides issuing the above prayer, Pius X. caused letters of congratulation and strong approval to be sent to Canon Antoni and to Vittorio Mariani, who had published pamphlets advocating the use of Frequent Communion, and explaining away difficulties and objections.

But to return to more solemn and more strictly official acts.

Since February, 1905, however, Rome has gone a step further, or, rather, has strided towards its goal. On December 29, 1905, the Sacred Roman Congregation of the Council—charged with watching over the execution of the decrees issued by the Council of Trent—published with pontifical sanction a " Decree on Daily Reception of the Holy Eucharist," or, to adopt the more explanatory heading under which the text of the decree appeared in the *Acta Sanctæ Sedis* (February, 1906), " On the Dispositions requisite for Frequent and Daily Reception of Communion."

Authoritative guidance on this point of the spiritual life was obviously needed by way of supplement to the aforesaid prayer. For while, on the one hand, that prayer seemed to contemplate and to desire daily Communion for all Catholic souls, without any distinction and without postulating any special degree of virtue, it had, on the other hand, been customary for reputable theologians and experienced spiritual guides to exact somewhat exceptional spiritual qualifications from those who aspired to "frequent" Communion—*i.e.*, Communion received several times in a week, if not literally every day, and, commonly, under one and the same weekly Confession. It had been a common practice to reserve this "privilege" for souls possessed of the will and opportunity for leading a life of more than average piety and goodness.

In the case of the average Catholic, Communion once a week at most, with perhaps an extra Communion thrown in now and again for some special reason, was deemed the most liberal allowance that prudence sanctioned. Hence everyone who had become acquainted with the indulgenced prayer referred to must have felt that this opposition existing between the mind of the Holy See —as foreshadowed in the authorized devotion— and the traditional application of somewhat severe moral tests to frequent and daily communicants needed to be removed by equal authority. The Sacred Congregation of the Council has now dispelled the contradiction with

wonderful thoroughness. It has, in fact, practically abolished the usual ascetical tests of fitness for daily Communion. It lays down two conditions, and *two only*, both of which are well within the power of every Catholic to secure—to wit (1) the "state of grace" or freedom from conscious *mortal* sin; (2) a "right mind," or motive, or intention, in approaching the Sacrament. These two qualifications are declared "sufficient" for *daily* Communion *in every case.*

In discussing this epoch-making decree—for such it may truly be called—the following order will be observed:

I. Substance of the preamble to the practical rules.

II. Reflections on preamble.

III. Rules or Articles drawn up by the Congregation, together with running commentary and explanations.

DECREE I.

ON DAILY COMMUNION.

I. Substance of the Preamble.

After recalling the desire expressed by the Tridentine Fathers (Session 22, chapter vi.) that the faithful should communicate sacramentally, and not merely spiritually, when assisting at Holy Mass, the Roman decree goes on to show how conformable daily Communion is to the Eucharistic teaching of our Lord as recorded in St. John's Gospel, to the practice of the early Church in apostolic days (Acts ii. 42), and to the teaching of the Fathers in their expositions of the petition in the "Our Father": "Give us this day our daily bread."*

It traces the falling off of zeal for frequent Communion to the influence of the "plague of Jansenism"—the heresy which arose in France during the seventeenth century. From the spirit which this religious pest infused, even into minds that were innocent of any deliberate unorthodoxy, there sprang dissension amongst spiritual persons about the dispositions of soul needed as con-

* See quotations from Tertullian, and St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine, pp. 55-58.

ditions for a constant use of the Holy Sacrament, and these conditions began to be imposed with ever-increasing severity. Hence—as the decree goes on to tell us—"very few were considered worthy to communicate daily . . . the rest being content to partake of it once a year, or once a month, or, at the utmost, weekly. Nay, to such a pitch was rigorism carried that whole classes of persons were excluded from approach to the Holy Table—for instance, those engaged in trade, or even *those who were living in the state of matrimony.*" These "italics" even are Roman, and not ours. After reciting certain opposite extremes provoked by excessive severity—such as holding *daily* Communion to be of Divine precept, to be observed even on Good Friday,* and recounting the vigilance of the Holy See in condemning such and similar extravagances—the Decree adds significantly: "The poison of Jansenism, which—under pretext of showing due honour and reverence to the Holy Eucharist—had infected the minds even of good men, *did not entirely disappear.* The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for the lawful and laudable frequentation of the Sacrament survived the

* The editor of the *Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, in a note appended to the present Decree, interestingly recalls the extremes to which things were carried by advocates of the aforesaid false opinion. They even felt it necessary to carry Holy Communion daily to those whom some trivial and passing ailment confined to their beds. This was certainly a case of out-Trenting Trent, and of trying to be more Catholic than the Pope.

declarations of the Holy See: so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the faithful only in rare cases and under many conditions." On the contrary, other theological authorities, we are told, held a milder course, for which they quoted the authority of the Fathers, and held that there was no difference between the dispositions requisite for daily Communion and those needed for a weekly or monthly one.* The disturbance of conscience and heated controversy which this state of things engendered moved certain "distinguished men, themselves pastors of souls," to petition Pius X. to set these doubts and disputes at rest by some authoritative pronouncement. His Holiness, "being most earnestly desirous that the faithful should be invited to partake of the sacred banquet as often as possible, and even daily, and should profit by its fruits," referred the matter to the Sacred Congregation of the Council, "to be looked into and decided once for all (*definiendum*)."

Then follow the practical Rules laid down by the Congregation of the Council, which will be given and discussed presently.

II. Salient Points in the Preamble.

The Root of the Matter.—The crucial question really at issue between the rigorous and milder schools of Eucharistic practice was this: In de-

* See St. Ambrose, p. 56.

termining whether Catholics should communicate frequently or not, which was to be considered in the first place—greater reverence for the sanctity of the Sacrament, or the spiritual need of the imperfect communicant? Now, as the Sacrament of the Eucharist is our Lord's own institution, the answer to this vital question must depend upon the answer to another one: What was our Lord's own purpose in giving us this Sacrament?

It would seem, therefore, that the preamble goes to the very root of the whole question, where it authoritatively puts before us the *purpose* of the Eucharist in the designs of Christ. These are the golden words:

"Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, **may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable**; so that its primary purpose is not that **the honour and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients.*** Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist 'the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins.'"†

* St. Augustine, Serm. 57 in Matth., de Orat. Dom., n. 7.

† Session xiii., chapter ii.

Truly an illuminating commentary upon an axiom universally accepted in theory by theologians—*Sacramenta propter homines.* That is to say, as our Lord taught concerning the observance of the Sabbath, Sacraments are made for the benefit of man, and not man for the Sacraments. In so far as the points of instruction following the preamble have been overlooked in the practice of the past, the oversight seems mainly traceable to a timid grasp of the above root-conception as to the true purpose assigned by the Lover of Souls to the Sacrament of His love. That purpose, as we are instructed, is not *mainly* that we practise reverence, but, rather, that we consult our own spiritual need.

The plea of reverence, as the Decree plainly suggests, has been the responsible cause of a too sparing use of Holy Communion by many. In view, however, of what faith teaches us about the unique nature and dignity of this Holy Sacrament, it may at first surprise and even somewhat stagger us to find reverence for the Divine Guest Whom we receive, represented by the Decree as being an object of anything less than first importance.

It is not, however, that the Holy See has now discounted the duty of reverence. How could it ? All it has done is to point out that *abstention* from frequent use of this " Divine remedy " and a certain aloofness from the healing touch of the Divine Physician is *the wrong way of showing* that reverence. As a French writer, commenting on the teaching of St. Ambrose, puts it : " St.

Ambrose thus maintains that to hold back from Communion is not piety according to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ, Who has not said, Reverence it and keep away, but Reverence it and draw nigh."

It is a question of fact. Our Lord, Who must know better than we can the infinite holiness of God, and hence the reverence due to it, wills us to use His Body and Blood for the healing of our diseases, and not as some rich and costly dainty such as can only be ventured on by the strong and healthy. The fact that this is His will we accept like loyal sons from the authoritative teaching of our Holy Father. Such, then, being the fact, it is not our business to pretend to be more prudent for the honour of Christ than He is Himself.

The Christian who abstains from this Holy Sacrament lest his venial sins and imperfections defile it, resembles a stumbling cripple who, having been presented with a handsome crutch for his use, lest he fall by the way, proceeds to hang it up over his chimney as an ornament, lest the dusty roads should soil it, and prefers to continue risking his neck as heretofore. But, even so, we do that Christian too much honour by this comparison; for the Holy One cannot be defiled. He can only cleanse, and given the *state of grace* on our part, He infallibly does it.

Let us not fail to notice the expression, "Divine remedy," as applied to the Body and Blood of our Lord. The Latin original is even more forcible—*divinum pharmacum*, or Divine *medicine*, or drug.

We do not avoid the physician when we are sick, nor abstain from medicines in our ailments until we get better. Yet—in the spiritual order—this is just what a misconceived "reverence" would lead us to in regard to Holy Communion.

In one sense this seeming disregard of reverence should astonish us less, and not more, in the case of this very Sacrament than with regard to any other. For the Eucharist is double-sided. Beyond its sacramental character it also possesses a sacrificial one—as the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is precisely through this, its sacrificial aspect, that we are enabled to pay to God, and pay fittingly, our creature debt of *honour* and *reverence*. As a Sacrament, the Eucharist is God's pitying and self-abasing gift to man; as a Sacrifice, it is man's gift and tribute, through the hands of the Divine Priest and Victim, to the majesty and holiness of God. Thus, although in adapting this "Divine remedy" mainly to our own base needs, we seem to neglect that other need and urgent duty of reverencing God, yet we shall reduce both these requirements to perfect harmony if we but carry out the wish of Trent, that our reception of the Sacrament should be commonly joined to our attendance at the Holy Sacrifice.

Reference has been made in the foregoing observations to the primary *purpose* of the Eucharist—set forth in the Roman Decree—as being the key to the whole pronouncement. And, indeed, it seems that this shyness of daily Communion, which the Holy See desires to cure,

springs from putting "reverence" first and human spiritual needs and frailties second. But may not causes be traced a trifle more deeply? Reflection may easily suggest to us that the ultimate root of that misconception as to the "chief" object of the Eucharist—which Rome has scotched—is to be found yet deeper down, and consists in an imperfect appreciation of the genius of Christianity, by which is here meant the genius of that fundamental Christian mystery, the Incarnation of the Divine Son. Not that those "pious and learned" men referred to in the Decree as excluding for prudential motives the rank and file of souls from frequent access to Holy Communion can be supposed to have lacked a theoretic appreciation of that mystery; but only that they appear to have lacked consistency in working it out to its logical conclusions with reference to the use of the Eucharist.

When a Protestant deems the Real Presence of its very nature incredible, not because Infinite Power *could* not work the marvel involved, but because Infinite Greatness cannot be conceived as tolerating such close contact with sin-infected creatures, how do we meet his difficulty? Do we not retort, if he be a believing Christian, by another question: What, then, about the self-abasement of God in the Incarnation; what of Christ's familiar intercourse "with publicans and sinners"; and, still more, what about His voluntary submission to the indignities and outrages of the Sacred Passion? Had regard for "reverence" due to Divine Majesty prevailed in the

Divine plan of redemption, as we know it, evidently there could have been no lowly manger and no ignominious Cross. And yet, in the end, "glory to God in the highest," the supreme and ultimate end of all things, was secured, although this was not the *proximate* and *immediate* end of the Incarnation and Passion. That immediate object was the rescue and raising up of fallen man. "Although He thought it no robbery to be equal to God," nevertheless "He humbled Himself"—emptied Himself out—"taking the form of a servant." Whatever loss of external honour such ineffable condescension entailed, that was to be, so to say, compensated for by man's praise, thanksgiving, and love of a God Who could so forget Himself in order to be mindful of sinful misery. And just as the Son of God did not look first to His own dignity in becoming a helpless babe, or in freely offering Himself to be gibbeted like a felon on Golgotha, so, ever consistent in His wondrous love, neither did He make reverence for Himself the first object in instituting that Sacrament which forms the memorial of these His wonderful works of love. He became a despised infant for love; "a worm and no man" for love; and, once more, in Holy Communion, He stoops still lower, in order to become, as the Decree tells us, "daily bread," our *divinum pharmacum*, or Divine drug, for love.

Jesus is *all for us*. In His birth He is the Child born to us, the Son given to us; in His hidden life He devotes Himself to sanctifying our family life; in His public ministry He is our Way,

our Truth, and our Life; "He was delivered for our sins and rose for our justification." Why, then, should we do violence to all analogy, and, in our conduct towards Holy Communion, act as though He had suddenly ceased to be the selfsame unselfish, devoted Jesus, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? He is all for us; and if we would be all for Jesus we must constantly bring ourselves under His transforming influence by union with Him in His Holy Sacrament.

Another reflection upon causes. Without any indulgence in pious fancy, may it not be said that this great revival of eagerness for the daily "manna" and bread of our souls is an obvious fruit of the gradual working throughout the Universal Church of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? History would seem to confirm the theory. No student of the Church's life, as portrayed in the ecclesiastical history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, would, we fancy, doubt that devotion to the Sacred Heart, as a public one, was the weapon put by God's providence into the hand of the Church for combating Jansenism, with its Old Law spirit of fear and its false and suicidal view of "reverence" due to Sacraments.

But why stop here? Heresy is known to die hard, and, as we know, muscular movement does not always end even with death. "The poison of Jansenism," the Decree reminds us, "did not entirely disappear." It was devotion to the Heart of Him who said "Come to Me" which grappled with, and knocked senseless, the formal

and soul-freezing heresy of the day. Then it can be hardly rash to say that it is the truth of God's human, as well as Divine, sympathy with sinful man—His anxiety to bring man ever closer to Him in the bonds of charity—in a word, it is the spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart which is now about to end the cadaverous twitching of a defunct Jansenism, and enable the Church to crown its triumph over heresy by means of frequent and daily sacramental union with the Divine Heart. "Come!" It cried out to the labouring and sorely burdened; and now, please God, exhorted by Christ's Vicar, and all unworthy as we are, our cry shall be, "We come!"

Prejudices and old habits of thought are not easily removed, and this seems particularly true of pious ones. The term "pious" is used here in no deprecatory sense. By a pious prejudice is meant one professing to base itself on unquestioned religious principles, although having, in reality, no logical connection with them. The Decree issued by the Holy See, and voicing what we know to be the most ardent desire of the Holy Father, will doubtless take time to impress itself upon the minds of Catholics. The notion that the practice of daily Communion—on the two very commonplace conditions of *the state of grace* and *a right motive or intention—must* somehow interfere with due reverence towards our Lord's Sacred Body and Blood is one that will at first continually recur even to loyal minds anxious to carry out the Pontiff's wishes. It is apparently in anticipation of this that the Holy See

has gone out of its way to insist so clearly and strongly upon the *true aim* of the Sacred Heart in instituting this Sacrament of Divine love and condescension—viz., *to succour us* in our sinful weakness, and not primarily to consult Divine dignity. It desired to bring home to us that the Lover of Souls vouchsafes to embrace us, if necessary, with all our *venial* stains and unsightly imperfections upon us, so that these may be gradually worn away by such close contact with Holiness and Purity Itself. So will an earthly mother pour out her love upon her most deformed child, as though it were the greatest beauty.

III. Rules for Frequent and Daily Communion laid down by the Sacred Congregation of the Council.*

Rule 1.—"**Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful,** *of whatever rank and condition of life ;* **so that** *no one* **who is in** *the state of grace,* **and who approaches the holy table** *with a right and devout intention,* **can lawfully be hindered therefrom.**"

OBSERVATIONS.

"*Of whatever rank and condition of life.*" A necessary piece of instruction. For, as the Decree notes elsewhere, it has been customary

* N.B.—All italics are the writer's unless otherwise stated.

with some in the past to exclude "those engaged in trade, or even *those who were living in the state of matrimony*. The italics here are Rome's, not ours. Such persons could only have been excluded because their states of life were considered to involve many venial sins and imperfections. The reason for their *special* treatment could not have been the absence of sincere confession for mortal sins, for this would be an essential impediment not only to daily Communion, but to *all* Communion, and would apply equally to *any* state or condition of life, the religious state included. But Rule 1 negatives venial sin as a hindrance, and declares only two conditions to be needed—viz., freedom from *mortal* sin and a right motive in approaching the Sacrament. It must have been on this very ground that some writers (referred to in the Decree) have maintained that no more was needed for daily than for weekly or monthly Communion.

"*In the state of grace . . . a right and devout intention.*" When dealing with *essential* dispositions of the soul for Communion *in general*, we say that *any* Communion made in the state of grace (to be procured, when *mortal* sin has been committed, by a good Confession) must needs be "worthy" in St. Paul's sense (1 Cor. xi. 27, 28), according to the authoritative explanation of that text given us by the Council of Trent (Session xiii., chapter vii.). How, then, is it that in Rule 1 Rome adds a *second* condition—viz., "a right intention," or motive, in receiving?

To explain this we must consider what happens when a person receives Communion in the state of grace, but out of a *venially sinful motive*—say, to exhibit the glories of a new dress at the rails. Such a reception is obviously a venially *sinful act*, although, as grave theologians teach, the substantial effect of the Sacrament—*i.e.*, an increase of grace—is not, and cannot be, thus hindered. But clearly, though *post factum* fruit is derived from such a Communion, the act itself of reception is an unlawful one, because corrupted by a venially sinful motive, and hence no one could *advise* or *consent to* a Communion of the kind.* In the Decree, however, Rome *is* both consenting to and advising Daily Communion. Consequently Rome must necessarily exact a right motive from the communicant, lest it should become a party to a venially sinful act. To do this would be to advise the use of an *unlawful means*—viz., a venially sinful Communion—in order to obtain a *good end*—viz., increase of grace in the soul of the receiver; or, in other words, it would be to make the end justify the means.

Reference has already been made, in a bracket, to the invariable necessity of Confession before Communion when *mortal* sin has been committed since the last sacramental absolution. It will

* That fruit should follow, though the act of communicating be *venially* sinful, is simply the necessary outcome of the nature which our Lord has assigned to His own Sacrament—a further proof of His loving determination to purify our unworthy souls.

now be useful to deal with this point somewhat more fully. Every instructed Catholic knows that a *perfect* act of contrition—*i.e.*, an act of sorrow for sin out of the motive of perfect love of God—instantly removes the guilt of a mortal sin from the soul, and puts it into a state of friendship with God previous to the actual confession of the sin, which, however, still remains obligatory. This is true. But there is a *separate* law according to which no one who has sinned *mortally* may receive the Holy Eucharist until he has confessed the sin and received priestly absolution for it—"no matter," adds the Council of Trent when laying down this law, "how truly contrite he may think himself." This is the particular form which the "proving oneself" required by St. Paul (1 Cor. xi.) must take, according to the Council; and it is not allowed to a Catholic to interpret Scripture in a sense opposed to that of the Church. In fact, saving the case of *bona fide* ignorance, such a person would again *lose* the state of grace recovered by his perfect sorrow the moment he fully decided to violate the grave law binding him to previous confession of his *mortal* sin.

RULE 2.—"**A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vainglory, for human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.**"

In thus defining so precisely the meaning to be attached to "a right intention," especially when coupled with the epithet "devout" appearing in Rule 1, the Holy See evidently means to guard against recurring to the old, severer tests of fitness for daily Communion, under cover of the expression "a right and *devout* intention," previously used by it.

"*A right intention.*" In short, any virtuous motive in approaching Holy Communion suffices to fulfil this condition; for the examples of good motives given in the Rule are evidently not exhaustive. Thus, to go to Communion because if I do not a relative or friend, who is in evident need of spiritual help, will stay away is "a right intention"—*i.e.*, of charity and zeal for my neighbour's soul.

AN EXAMPLE.

Would the following be a venially sinful motive of "human respect"? Some special feast, celebration, or anniversary occurs, and being a well-known member of the congregation, or an elder in a family, it would be noticeable were I not to join in the act of devotion with the rest; so I receive Holy Communion for this reason, whereas otherwise I should not do. In such a case it is to be presumed that my motive really is not to shock or disedify others. Unless I am exceptionally silly, my motive would not be positively to procure esteem as a devout person, which would be wrong. My motive seems a good and right

one in this case. For to give reasonable disedification is scandal in miniature, and it is virtuous to avoid it. The following case would be different: It is *not* any special occasion, and I go to Mass without intending to communicate. But I see a good many persons going to the rails, and, *merely* in order not to be thought singular, as I foolishly argue, I go with the rest. That certainly does seem a fault.

"*Not out of routine.*" Vanity and human respect are, perhaps, more easily identified. But what is meant here by "routine"? Surely not simply that daily Communion has become a habit of our lives? Otherwise all virtuous habits would be blameworthy. Nor can it mean that Communions devoid of *sensible* devotion, and adhered to on dry principle, are blameworthy. For this, too, could be said of every virtuous act that we perform in the spirit of faith because we know it to be pleasing to God, but still with aridity of soul and even strong repugnance of our lower nature. Such acts are often far more meritorious than those done with ease in moments of spiritual comfort or elation. Hence the "routine" to be avoided must evidently be that which leads a person to communicate *quite mechanically*, and with no reverent attention of mind to the sacred nature of what he is doing. We can understand a young school child, accustomed to move with the rest of the flock, going up to the Communion rails and receiving only because his companions are doing so all around

him. That, probably, would be a fair instance of *the state of mind* implied by "routine." But more will be said later on this point, under "Difficulties," p. 61.

RULE 3.—**"Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future; and if they have this sincere purpose it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto."**

The Holy See would not have us undervalue the evils of venial sin, either in itself or as an obstacle to deriving *still greater* benefit from Holy Communion. At the same time it re-asserts the fundamental principle that "it is sufficient to be free from *mortal* sin, with a purpose of never sinning in future"—*i.e.*, never sinning *mortally*. Rule 3 distinguishes between different *kinds* of venial sin—not, of course, meaning that *any* kind debars us from Communion on account of its deliberateness, but in order to point out from which kind it is *more* desirable that the communicant should be free. For *every* real sin there must be *some* degree of advertence and deliberation. If there be none, then there may be an *imperfection*—*i.e.*, a lack of obtainable virtue, but not *sin*. But, given advertence and

deliberation, these may be present in varying degrees. It is to venial sins committed with *full* advertence and deliberation that the Rule calls our special attention. For these contain greater malice, and, moreover, are more easily avoided, owing to the clearer warning of conscience which precedes them. It is easy to see the difference between an impatient word blurted out upon unexpected provocation and, say, a lie of excuse told to cover a blunder, which has been calmly invented and planned some hours previously, in anticipation of being found out; or, again, a persistent habit of unkindness towards a particular person, such as does not, however, amount to causing them very serious unhappiness, which last might easily be a grievous sin.

We have also indicated to us one of the effects of the Sacrament—that of cleansing the soul from venial sin and from a leaning towards it. The Council of Trent had called the Holy Eucharist "the antidote by which we are healed from our daily faults, and are preserved from mortal sins" (Session xiii., chapter ii.). So, too, in its preamble, the present Decree states that the Eucharist is designed by Christ "to cleanse . . . from daily faults," and to give us strength "to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable." This Holy Sacrament, then, purifies us from those venial sins of which we would fain be rid.

Just as small spots of wax upon a garment will be dissipated by close approach to a flame, so the ardent love of the Sacred Heart, burning

within us after receiving, clears away the smaller blemishes of the soul. Also, by strengthening our wills in good, the Sacrament weakens their bent towards venial sin.

RULE 4.—"**But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to the strength, circumstances, and duties of each.**"

Here, again, the Holy See warns us against underrating the *additional* fruitfulness that will accrue to those who, not content with essential dispositions, add to these in the form of greater fervour and devotion. Sacraments, as we know, work in the soul of their own innate, Christ-given force, provided no positive obstacle of our own placing hinder their operation. But such additional industries as devotions for Holy Communion and thanksgiving after it widen the capabilities of the soul for receiving grace in greater abundance. The vessel is enlarged, and so its capacity is increased. It is not that our pieties, however perfect, add one jot to the efficacy inherent in our Lord's sacramental instrument, but only that they give it a more favourable soil to work upon.

But the Decree fully recognises that some

communicants will have more spiritual strength, or a greater aptitude for devotion, or be more favourably circumstanced than others. Hence, with her usual moderation, the Church adds the qualifying phrase, "according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties." As much facility in pious exercises is not to be expected of the child as of the steadier adult, of an average boy as of a girl, of the sick as of those in health, of those whose life duties absorb most of their energies and spare time, as of those who abound in leisure and have few cares. The tailor must cut according to his cloth.

RULE 5.—"**That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone** (*ne quemquam avertant*) **from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace, and approaches with a right intention.**"

One may ask: Does the above Rule mean that a penitent must be constantly asking the confessor's leave to continue the practice of daily Communion? It seems not, if we weigh the terms carefully.

The Rule appears to contain two points—one affecting the penitent, the other the confessor.

1. *On the penitent's side.* A penitent wishing to begin the practice should ask a confessor's advice on the matter. But as the latter is warned "not

to dissuade anyone" from the practice, and, of course, still less to forbid it (where the two specified conditions are observed), the penitent seems only to need* the confessor's judgment at the start to the effect that he or she is one who will secure the fulfilment of the said conditions. For, given these, the Holy See cautions confessors not to object. But not only not to object, for in a later Rule (Rule 6) confessors are named amongst those who are frequently " and with great zeal " to *exhort* the faithful to frequent and daily Communion. No doubt, should the penitent become aware of any *marked* falling off in care, so that he has *solid* reason to doubt whether he continues to fulfil the two requisite conditions, he ought to submit his case again to the confessor's judgment.

2. *On the confessor's part*, the rule appears to call for some vigilance over daily communicants.

* *i.e.*, in order to comply with Article—or Rule—No. 5. But this rule is itself of counsel only, and does not require consultation with the confessor as an indispensable condition for daily Communion. The only indispensable conditions are those specified in Article—or Rule—No. 1. Thus, Dom Pierre Sebastian, O.S.B., commenting upon the Papal dispensation for non-fasting Communion in the case of invalids, and explaining the words "with the confessor's advice [*de confessarii consilio*]" says: "Let us observe here how the Holy See adheres faithfully to the principles laid down in the decree of December 20, 1905, according to which the confessor's consent or permission is no longer necessary, but only his advice. . . . The penitent will perform an act of prudence and wisdom in following his advice, but is not bound to do" (*Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, March, 1907).

lest in course of time they come to overlook either of the two conditions. This duty, however, falls on the confessor, and appears to involve no obligation on the penitent's side of anxiously and repeatedly inquiring of him "whether it is all right." As it is for the priest to do his duty by speaking, if necessity occur, his silence may be taken for consent and approval.

Besides the five Rules already quoted, the Decree prescribes four additional ones. But since these refer chiefly to persons exercising spiritual jurisdiction over souls, and to Religious Orders and Congregations, there will be no need to quote them in full. They can be seen in the full text of the Decree as separately published. There are, however, one or two points in these additional rulings which, indirectly at least, claim attention from the laity in general. Thus, we should note—by way of convincing ourselves that in this matter the Holy See is thoroughly in earnest—that "parish priests, confessors, and preachers are required under Rule 6 to exhort the faithful to the practice of frequent and daily Communion, frequently and with great zeal." Ecclesiastical writers are forbidden henceforward to indulge in "*contentious* disputations *concerning the dispositions* requisite for the practice in question, and prelates are required to inform the Holy See concerning the carrying out of this Decree when rendering an account of their spiritual charges.

Speaking of houses of education, Rule 7 declares: "It [*i.e.*, daily Communion] is also to

be specially promoted in ecclesiastical seminaries, . . . as also in all Christian establishments of *whatever kind* for the training of youth."

No institution, therefore, of any description where the young are educated is excepted from the Decree. The term "establishments for the training of youth" cannot be intended—as some have appeared to think—merely for ecclesiastical seminaries or the like, since these have just received specific mention. Besides, the epithet "Christian" would be a clumsy substitute for "ecclesiastical"—and Roman Decrees are not wont to be slipshod.

This point deserves attention. For some might consider that Communion once a week was "quite enough" for a young child just admitted to its first Communion. It is not impossible even that parents might be tempted to assume a responsibility which is committed by Christ to His ministers, and undertake to give spiritual direction to their children as to frequency of their Communion—a right which express laws of the Church forbid even to a religious Superioress in relation to her subjects. who, however, are under a vow of obedience to her. If we are to follow our supreme spiritual guide rather than our own theories, it is difficult to understand by what right young children could be shut out from the benefits of the Decree.

Whether we consider the *spiritual needs* of these rapidly developing souls, or the importance of securing *the two conditions* demanded, young

children appear to be just the ones who should be encouraged to communicate "frequently"—*i.e.*, in the sense of the Decree. While children are young you can far more easily shape them for good than later on, when their passions have begun to strengthen. How important it is to thoroughly sanctify them early! Yet how shall this be more surely done than by nourishing them continually upon the "Wine that begets virgins"?

As for the two needful dispositions, is the state of grace to be procured more easily in others than in little children? The child, too, is usually far more free from *self-consciousness* than adults, and this quality, therefore, renders Communions out of such motives as vanity and human respect far less likely in them than in others. The only respect in which, perhaps, a little more watchfulness on the part of confessors will be needed, in the case of the younger ones, is with regard to "*routine.*" Yet even here, if priests carry out the instructions of the Decree, "*frequently* and with *great zeal* to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice," they will have little difficulty in presenting the subject to children during instructions in such a form as amply to secure a right motive. Indeed, nothing is easier than to put the matter in some simple way that will seize the childish mind, and beget in its little soul a proper intention, even though the child, if questioned, might not be able to formulate the motive in words, so as to bring it clearly under one or other of the categories mentioned in Rule 2.

To economize the Decree with respect to little children would lay us open to the reproof administered by Christ to the yet unsanctified Apostles when He said, "Suffer little children to come to Me, and hinder them not," and to thwart the desire of the Sacred Heart as communicated to us by Its Vicar on earth.*

* This was penned in June, 1906. Since then an answer of the Sacred Congregation of the Council has authoritatively interpreted its Decree "On Daily Communion" in favour of younger children, "once they have been admitted to their first Communion." (See below, III., p. 42.)

DECREE II.

BY WHICH DAILY COMMUNICANTS MAY GAIN ALL INDULGENCES, WITHOUT BEING OBLIGED TO CONFESS WEEKLY.

THE above Decree was issued on February 14, 1906, and introduces a change — in favour of daily communicants only—with regard to the "usual conditions" for gaining plenary indulgences.

The usual conditions are — (1) Confession, (2) Communion, and (3) prayer for the Pope's intentions. The Decree deals only with the first of these three conditions. Previous to its publication, what was the position of those wishing to gain plenary indulgences? It was this: If they were in the habit of confessing once a week they could, under that one weekly Confession, try for any number of plenary indulgences. They were not bound to confess separately for gaining each, though of course they had to *communicate* and say the prayers for each. Now, this obligation of weekly Confession ceases for those who communicate daily. Moreover, in their case, "daily" Communion need not be taken too literally; so that if they chance to omit Com-

munion " once or twice " in the week, they may still benefit by this new privilege.

For others the old arrangement holds good—that is to say, that if they habitually go to Confession once a week, they can gain any plenary indulgences that occur under the single weekly Confession.

As theologians teach us, the " once a week " need only be taken to mean that there must be a Confession once *in* each week. It is not necessary that only seven days exactly should intervene between two Confessions. Thus, a person who goes to Confession on Monday in one week and on Friday in the following week will satisfy this condition, although *eleven* days intervene between the two Confessions.

Observations.

The first impression produced on some minds by the above Decree seemed—somewhat strangely—to have been one of surprise, as though the Holy See were discouraging the wholesome practice adopted by many good Catholics of approaching the Sacrament of Penance every week.

Now, the Decree says nothing on this subject one way or another. It has simply nothing to do with this matter of devotion. The Decree is exclusively concerned with the *necessary conditions for gaining plenary indulgences.* It does not say: You are not recommended to go to Confession every week, if such has been your

practice ; but only : You can, if a daily communicant, still gain these indulgences, although, perhaps, you have not confessed any time during the week.

Further, to understand that the Holy See was here showing itself indifferent to a devout habit of confessing weekly would be to suppose that it was contradicting Article, or Rule, 4 of the former Decree, in which we are told that " the Sacraments of the New Law . . . produce a greater effect *in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better. . . .*" And no one can doubt but that the greater purity of conscience and the additional grace derived from frequently receiving sacramental absolution improve the recipient's dispositions, and so enable him to obtain still greater fruit from his Communion.

DECREE III.

ROMAN ANSWER TO CERTAIN QUESTIONS ON DAILY COMMUNION.

On September 15, 1906, the Congregation of the Council issued a reply to two questions that had arisen in connection with its Decree of December 20, 1905, "On Daily Communion."

Two questions had been raised: (1) Did the Holy See mean to recommend frequent and daily Communion even to *younger* children (who had made their first Communion)? (2) How were chronic invalids, or those going through protracted illnesses, to share the benefits of frequent Communion—not being dangerously sick, and at the same time being unable to observe the prescribed fast from midnight?

We give the Latin text of the summarized reply, and add a translation of the same:

"Ad I.: Sacræ Communionis frequentiam commendari juxta articulum primum Decreti* etiam pueris, qui ad sacram Mensam juxta normas in Catechismo Romano, cap. 4, n. 63, semel admissi, ab eius frequenti participatione

* "On Daily Communion," December 20, 1905.

prohiberi non debent, sed potius ad id hortari, reprobata praxi contraria alicubi vigente.

"Ad II.: Juxta mentem, facto verbo cum Smo."*

Translation of Above.

"To the First Point: That, in accordance with Article the First of the Decree, frequent use of Holy Communion is recommended even to younger children, who, once they have been admitted to their first Communion, according to the prescriptions of the Roman Catechism, chapter iv., no. 63, ought not to be hindered from its frequent reception, but rather encouraged thereto, to the rejection of a contrary practice anywhere prevailing."

"To the Second Point: Your proposal favourably entertained, after putting the matter before the Holy Father."

N.B. — In the body of the answer, *Acta* p. 502, the Congregation states that the Holy Father has referred the matter back to it for consideration.

Most readers of the original Decree, here interpreted by the Congregation that issued it, will, we fancy, have thought that the Holy See was nothing if not abundantly clear and precise in expressing its earnest wishes. Nevertheless, it is evident—from the pages of this new docu-

* Sanctissimo, *i.e.*, The Holy Father.

ment—that some at least, however few, have thought otherwise, and have doubted whether younger children, though they may have made their First Communion in due course, are to be included among "all the faithful of whatever rank or condition of life" mentioned in Decree I., Article 1, who are urged by the Holy See to communicate frequently, and even daily, if possible.

It was certainly most important to dissipate this doubt, however unexpected, in the interests of numerous young souls. It is one that has a special bearing upon our Catholic colleges, schools, and institutions of all sorts, where younger children are being trained in knowledge and virtue. Most necessary, then, was it that Rome should decide upon the value of the argument that Article 7 of Decree I. — though ordering that the practice of frequent and daily Communion should be specially promoted in houses for the education of the young—excluded from its purview a considerable portion of their inmates, and withheld from them—or at least did not wish for them—the benefit of that "salutary" practice.

The point of the doubters appears to have been this: The word *ephebeis* used in Article 7 comes from *ephebus*, and the latter word, if taken in its technical and legal sense, means strictly a male child of at least fourteen, or a girl of at least twelve, years of age. This contention is presented by the Congregation in the words of "a Belgian religious man," who is quoted fully in

French. We translate from the *Acta* (p. 500): "The Decree of the Holy Father, though received with fullest submission, does not immediately remove the effects of long-existing prejudice [*des longs préjugés*] imbibed in the classroom and confirmed by practice [*puisés dans l'étude, et confirmés par la pratique*]. On this account certain prudent and pious priests entertain a fear lest people should still show themselves doubtful and severe about granting daily Communion to young children. Their fear is increased by the fact that the word *ephebeis* [*i.e.*, "establishments . . . for the training of youth"—Authorized translation] might be restricted by the prejudiced [*par des esprits prévenus*] exclusively to older children [*aux seuls adolescents*]. Yet both reason and experience prove beyond doubt that it is, *above all things*, important that Communion should be given to the younger ones, in order that they may be impregnated with the grace of our Lord [*imbuantur Christo*] before the passions have run riot in their hearts," etc.

In its reply the Congregation threshes out at length the whole case of the younger ones, dealing with the reasons advanced on either side. With regard to the term *ephebeis*, while admitting the strictly legal force of the term already noticed, it seems unwilling to discuss matters from the standpoint of an ecclesiastical dictionary. It proceeds instead to recall the primitive practice of giving Communion to senseless infants immediately after baptism, and notes the fact that the

Council of Trent (Session xxi., chapter iv.) would not condemn those who had adopted this now obsolete usage in olden times. Moreover, the views of the "Belgian religious" as to the supreme importance of frequent Communion for younger children are frankly adopted by the present Answer — one might almost say quoted —as follows: "It is most necessary that children should be imbued with Christ before passions have gained the start of them [*antequam passionibus præveniantur*], and so be enabled the more vigorously to repel the assaults of the devil, the flesh, and of other interior and exterior foes."

In this connection the Congregation cites the "Imitation of Christ" (book iv., chapter iii.), and also some admirable extracts from the late saintly Bishop de Ségur, part of whose heavenly joys must, one would think, consist in knowing how thoroughly his advocacy of frequent Communion for children has been now justified by supreme authority. We translate the whole quotation from the Italian version employed in the document: "Children may and ought to communicate frequently, just as much as adults. Our Lord does not require of them more than they are capable of giving Him, and He understands this thoughtlessness which alarms us; but He knows equally, and far better than we do, that innocence is the most precious of all treasures, that Satan seeks to rob them of it early, and that Communion alone can protect them from the

wiles of the enemy. . . . For communicating well, it is enough to receive our Saviour with a good will. And this children will have just as much as adults; and experience proves that sincerity of the most genuine kind is to be found in the goodwill of a child who has made its first Communion. It loves Jesus Christ, it desires to have Him; then why not give Him to the child? Very often the child is more fit to receive Him than ourselves, who undervalue its piety. Thoughtlessness is no obstacle to Holy Communion unless it be wilful. . . . Children are giddy. Yes! but they are good and loving. And just on account of their need to love it is necessary to give love its true nourishment. We must cause them to love Jesus Christ, and, for this end, place them frequently in closest intimacy with Him. Their faults, however real they may be, have little consistency, and it is precisely this pious practice which prevents these faults from becoming vices." The Congregation adds here: "In this way, at any rate, will that word of the Lord be fulfilled: 'Suffer little children to come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' The kingdom of heaven on earth is no other than the Eucharist, which was instituted for preserving and nourishing the spiritual life." Concerning the faults of childhood, which are so commonly made an excuse for keeping children from Holy Communion, even when long past the age at which they should have begun to communicate, the Holy See adopts in substance the views of

De Ségur : " The Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of the New Law, which confer both sanctifying and sacramental grace *ex opere operato* [*i.e.*, of their own inherent power, derived from the merits of Christ] as often as they meet with no obstacle [*obicem*] in the receiver. Nor is such obstacle more likely to be found in children than in adults. For apart from the fact that, in the former, lack of knowledge is compensated for by innocence, the plea that they are thoughtless and giddy ought not to be greatly pressed " [*nimis urgenda non est*].

It is to be observed that by its reply in favour of frequent Communion " even for younger children," the Holy See is not *adding* anything to the scope and provisions of the original Decree. On the contrary, we have it distinctly stated that the practice is " recommended " to these little ones "*according to the first Article of the Decree.*" Hence, in spite of the doubts of some, the children were already included under " all the faithful " there mentioned. Thus, even before the present Answer was issued by Rome, the words " so that *no one* who is in the state of grace . . . can lawfully be hindered," etc., originally applied to these children as truly as to anyone else.

Thus, the Congregation writes, *Acta*, p. 506 : " The same thing [*i.e.*, the mind of the Church concerning younger children] is to be gathered from the Decree issued by this Sacred Congregation on December 20, 1905, in which frequent and

daily Communion is recommended to *all the faithful;* also from the two other Decrees above cited from the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics, in which, on the above ground, special indulgences and privileges are granted indiscriminately *to all the faithful.* And there can be no doubt but that even young children [*pueros*], who have come to the use of reason, and have made their first Communion, are to be reckoned amongst these. This Sacred Congregation, indeed, ordered that daily Communion should be specially fostered in seminaries and every sort of educational establishment for youth [*ephebeis*]. But besides the fact that here there was question of giving a recommendation especially to seminaries and establishments for youth, without the rest of the faithful being therefore excluded, one would think that the term *ephebeorum* needed to be taken in the wider sense—namely, so as to signify all pious institutions in which even young children [*etiam pueri*] are taught and trained."

The reasoning here is fairly plain. The Congregation seems to say: In Article 7 We did indeed urge the practice of frequent and daily Communion upon seminaries and educational establishments for youth, *but in a special manner* [*præsertim*], and obviously not to the exclusion of *all the faithful of whatever state or condition of life* (Article 1), to whom We also recommended the same thing. Moreover, the Holy See has granted special privileges *on the ground of daily Com-*

munion "to all the faithful." Now, children of whatever age, who have attained to the use of reason, and have even made their first Communion, must unquestionably be ranked amongst "all the faithful." But apart from this, we had reason to expect that, in the context of our Decree, people would have taken the term *ephebeis*, not in its narrower legal sense, but so as to include all pious institutions in which the young are trained.

The contents of this latest pronouncement of the Holy See may have its uses not merely for those charged with the cure of souls, but also for any parent who is prone to assume the responsibility of spiritually directing a child in the matter of its Communions. By such a venture the parent would be exercising a restraint upon the spiritual rights of the child such as the Holy See forbids even to a religious Superior in respect of her nuns, albeit these are bound to her by a special vow of obedience. The judgment as to fitness for Sacraments lies, by Christ's ordinance, with "the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1), His appointed ministers, and these in turn will dispense Sacraments according to the guidance of the Vicar of Christ.

As already stated, the Holy See has made no change so far in reply to the appeal made to it on behalf of chronic invalids. But, reading between the lines of the new document, many will doubtless perceive a foreshadowing of the relief given by a subsequent Decree which opens out frequent

Communion to these sufferers. The present Decree shows that, even at the time being, it was not at all impossible to procure from the Holy Office an indult for an individual *bona fide* case of hardship, permitting the invalid, who could not fast, occasionally to take food after midnight, in form of liquid only.

It was not a little significant that the *Acta*, in publishing these Answers, official organ though it is, openly requested its readers in a footnote to join in a petition to the Holy See for some kind of indult that would mitigate generally the hardship under which not a few invalids suffered, and permit them to break their fast in the sense just explained. This it would hardly have ventured to do without first feeling the pulse of Rome.*

* It should be noticed that no reference is made to non-fasting celebrations of Mass ; but no one would have looked for any who is acquainted with the strictness of the Holy See on that separable question.

DECREE IV.

NON-FASTING COMMUNION FOR THE SICK.

ATTENTION has already been called to the Answer of the Holy See (September 15, 1906), given in reply to two doubts or questions that had arisen out of the famous Decree on Daily Communion (December 20, 1905). The first of these questions was whether by that memorable document Rome had meant that the practice of daily Communion should be promoted even amongst younger children who had only just been admitted to their first Communion. To this query Rome's reply was a plain and emphatic "Yes." In the second question it had been asked whether some indulgent provision might not be made for those sick persons who, not being ill enough to receive the Blessed Eucharist as Viaticum—*i.e.*, without the obligation of fasting—were debarred from Holy Communion for long periods by their inability to maintain the "natural" fast from midnight. To this second query the Answer of September 15 gave a provisional reply, which, although it determined nothing, was couched in such terms as to show plainly that the cause of the sick was not being pleaded in vain. This hopeful sign duly fulfilled its promise.

By a Decree dated December 7, 1906, the Holy See considerably mitigated, for the benefit of real invalids, the severities of the law of fasting

before Communion, which binds all except those who are in danger of death.

We offer an English literal version of the business portion of this latest Decree :

"Petitions to this effect—*i.e.*, on behalf of the sick—were presented to our Most Holy Lord, Pope Pius X., and he, after maturely weighing the matter and conferring with the Sacred Congregation of the Council, has graciously conceded that sick persons who have already been laid up for a month,* and have no sure hope of speedy recovery, shall be allowed, with the confessor's approval [*de confessarii consilio*], to receive the Most Holy Eucharist in spite of their having taken nourishment in form of liquid [*per modum potus*] : in the case of those living in pious households where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, or which enjoy the privilege of having Mass celebrated in a domestic oratory, once or twice a week ; in the case of others, once or twice a month . . . etc., etc.

"Given at Rome, December 7, 1906.

"✠ VINCENT, Card. Bp. of Palestrina, Prefect.

"C. DE LAI, Secretary."

The following appear to be the principal points to be noticed :

1. The circumstances in which the sick person must be placed in order to benefit by the privilege granted. These are that the invalid must have

* The original phrase is *a mense decumbentibus*, which has been further explained by a fresh Roman decision. See Appendix I., p. 80.

been laid up for a month, and that there be no assured prospect that he will soon be well again.

2. The frequency with which the privilege of taking nourishment in some drinkable form (only)* may be used according to their home circumstances—viz., if they have the Blessed Sacrament in their homes, or have the privilege of Holy Mass in their domestic chapel or oratory, the privilege may be used, subject to consultation with the confessor, once or twice in the *week*; otherwise they may only avail themselves of the indult once or twice in the *month*.

This discrimination between one class of sick persons and another might at first sight appear invidious, and as if made in favour of the wealthier ones. For it is the latter who would more commonly have the Blessed Sacrament or Holy Mass in their houses. But it is needless to say that the secret of the distinction made by the Father of all the Faithful is not respect of persons. It should be remembered that the general legislation of the Church is framed in view of normal Catholic conditions. Under these it is *de rigueur* that the Blessed Sacrament, when carried to the houses of the sick, whether rich or poor, shall be

* "In form of liquid," or, more literally, "after the manner of drink." The Holy Office, in a reply of September 7, 1897, explains the meaning of this phrase as allowing a certain amount of solid food to be contained in the liquid—"*e.g.*, breadcrumbs (*pane grattato*), powdered pastes (semolino), etc., provided that the whole mixture do not lose its character as a liquid." Hence, still more, are such things as tea, coffee, milk, etc., allowable. The same rule applies to medicines. See *Analecta Juris Pontificii*, vol. for 1898, p. 142.

carried publicly, with attendance and outward ceremony befitting His Divine Majesty, and not secretly, as priests are allowed by privilege to carry it in England, for instance, and in non-Catholic countries. This most proper regard for the honour due to the Blessed Sacrament necessarily affects the frequency with which it can be taken out to the sick. It is not possible frequently to procure servers and attendants for the purpose, even on the smaller scale which in these days the Holy See sometimes allows.

This consideration suffices to show the complete reasonableness of limiting the non-fasting privilege somewhat in the case of the many sick who, not having the Blessed Sacrament in their homes nor an oratory in which Mass may be said, would need to have Holy Communion brought to them publicly through the streets. Were non-Catholic missionary countries alone to be considered, probably all the sick would have been treated on the same level, although other reasons of a practical nature for the aforesaid limitation are conceivable.

What the Fathers of the Church say on Daily Communion.

Tertullian (A.D. 199): After alluding to Christ as our spiritual food: "Then we find, too, that His body is reckoned [to be] in bread—'This is My body.' And so, in petitioning for our 'daily bread,' we ask for perpetuity in Christ and indivisibility from His Body" ("De Oratione," cap. vi.).

St. Cyprian of Africa (A.D. 248).—"When, therefore, He says that whosoever shall eat of His bread shall live for ever, as it is manifest that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by right of communion [*i.e.*, with the Church] are living, so, on the other hand, we must fear and pray lest anyone who, being withheld from communion, is separated from Christ's body, should remain at a distance from salvation; as He Himself threatens and says: 'Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye shall not have life in you.' And therefore we ask that our bread—that is, Christ—may be given to us daily, in order that we who abide in Christ may not depart from His sanctification and body" ("On the Lord's Prayer," No. 18).

Here it seems that Cyprian represents feeding upon "the daily bread of our Lord's *real* body in the Eucharist as the means for remaining united to Christ, both by interior "sanctification" and by visible and external union or communion with His moral or mystic body, the Catholic Church.

St. Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 370).—Of the Eucharist: "If it be 'daily bread,' why do you use it but once a year? Receive each day that which profits you daily. Live in such a way as to be fit to receive it every day. *If one be not worthy to receive it daily, neither is one fit to receive it once a year.* You know it: we tell you so continually, that whenever we offer the holy Sacrifice we recall to your minds the death, resurrection, and

ascension of the Saviour, and the remission of sins. And you do not hasten to receive every day this daily bread" ("De Sacramentis, Eucharistia").

"There are people who fancy *that the duty of penance consists in their abstaining from Communion.* This is to deal too harshly with themselves: it is exposing themselves to punishment, and refusing the remedy" ("De Pœnit.," II., cap. ix.).

St. Thomas Aquinas, on the Eucharist, quotes St. Ambrose thus: "I ought always to be receiving, since I am always sinning" (3, Quæst. LXXX., Art. x.).

St. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 429): "There remain now petitions for this life of our pilgrimage; therefore follows: 'Give us this day our daily bread. . . .' There is a spiritual food also which the faithful know, which you too shall receive, if pure, from the Altar of God. For shall we receive the Eucharist, then, only when we have reached Christ Himself and have begun to reign with Him eternally? Therefore the Eucharist is our 'daily bread'" ("On the Our Father"—to Neophytes and Catechumens—Migne, "Patres Latini," St. Aug., vol. v., column 389).

"Again, if by this 'daily bread' you understand that which the faithful receive, rightly do we pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' in order that we may so live as not to be separated from that altar" ("On the Our Father," another sermon, edit. Cologne, tome x.).

What Saints and Others say.

St. Alphonso Liguori, Doctor of the Church, quotes with approval the following words of Cacciaguerra: "There is no habit of sin, however deplorable or deep-rooted, which may not be diminished and ultimately extinguished by frequent Communion" ("An Apologetic Reply to D. Cyprian Aristasio").

St. John Baptist La Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers: "Nothing prepares us better for our next Communion than the preceding one."

Blessed Curé d'Ars: "Do not plead your many miseries. I would as soon hear you say that you do not call in the doctor because you are too sick."

Leo XIII.: "In these days men burn with an insatiable craving for pleasures: they are victims from early youth to a kind of pestilent contagion. But the Eucharist supplies us with an excellent remedy for this fearful evil."

Père Olivaint, S.J., put to death by the Paris Commune, 1871: "A Christian should be ever prepared for death and for Communion."

Dom Bosco: "Take frequent Communion from the educational system, and you banish morality from it."

Monseigneur de Ségur, author of "Frequent Communion": "You can never communicate too often if you do so with a right heart. . . . You can never communicate too often if you are in the

state of grace, and sincerely wish to belong to God. The oftener you receive Communion, the better—living as you are in the midst of coarseness, unchastity, shamelessness, and irreligion."

Monseigneur Gay: "The Eucharist hallows human life: it makes temples of your bodies, tabernacles of your souls. Do not profane what God has consecrated; cultivate eucharistic habits."

Monseigneur de la Bouillerie: "If you desire to practise your duties in life, practise Communion."

Père Herman, a convert from Judaism, a saintly Carmelite Friar, and an apostle of the Blessed Eucharist: "There is a day more glorious than that of our first Communion—the day of our second; and there is a day more glorious than the second—that of our third; and so on of the rest."

Some Difficulties considered.

Two classes of difficulties are conceivable—in principle and with regard to practice. To deal with the latter first: Almighty God does not command impossibilities, and neither does the Holy See counsel them. It is a mere truism to say that there are numbers of Catholics, especially in this Protestant land, to whom Communion is a moral impossibility except on Sundays, and perhaps on holidays of obligation. For example, in the case of the children of the poor attending schools under Government, the difficulty could hardly be surmounted in the vast majority of

instances. Similarly, people of the working class would seldom be able to go to church before going to their daily work. Then, *bona fide* difficulties will often spring from home duties and bad health, even in the case of the more independent classes. Of such difficulties nothing need be said except this : Let each do his best according to his opportunities in order to carry out the earnest wishes of our Holy Father. Though goodwill may do much—and it is often seen in a degree approaching to heroism—it will not do everything.

Difficulties as to eucharistic *principle* stand on an entirely different footing. After the appearance of these authoritative Decrees it might well be urged that such difficulties ought no longer to exist. The Holy See has pronounced upon the matter, has taught us what the sound Catholic principles are which govern the reception of Holy Communion, and trusts to her faithful children for their execution, as far as circumstances permit.

Still, if it be not an unlawful condescendence to explain away difficulties assailing the minds of Catholics with respect to articles of faith, in order to promote ease and readiness in believing, it cannot be wrong to endeavour to smoothe the way for practical conformity with Rome's ardent wishes in a matter of devotion.

Such a course is no contravention of Rule 9 of the first Decree, which forbids in future " all *contentious* controversies *concerning the dispositions requisite* for frequent and daily Com-

munion." Apart from the fact that contentiousness will be avoided, there will certainly be no discussion—contentious or amiable—about "requisite dispositions." These are taken as finally settled by authority, and will simply be invoked as first principles beyond dispute for answering certain objections born of old and—as we are once more instructed—mistaken views about Communion and its purposes.

Some Difficulties dealt with.

1. **"I must get holier before I venture to receive more frequently."**

Answer. And how, pray, are you going to do that, without constantly using the great means which our Lord has given you for remedying your faults? It is like saying: "I must get much stronger before I take the prescribed tonic regularly"! Or, "I must climb to the top bookshelf before using the ladder provided for the purpose of reaching it"!

2. **"The change would be too violent!** Hitherto I have been communicating seldom—once a month or once a quarter. To jump from that to frequent or daily Communion cannot be good for my spiritual constitution, any more than a change from 'slops' to large quantities of solid food is good for the bodily digestion of a convalescent."

Answer. The two cases are not parallel. In many points the comparison of the Eucharist

to bodily food holds good, but here it fails. In the case of the body the digestive organs need to be *disposed* by degrees to greater activity. In the case of the soul—given the state of grace and a right intention—*the sufficient dispositions are already there*, and no possible harm can come from a great change in the amount of this spiritual nourishment. The truer comparison would be that of a *malade imaginaire*, who fancies he cannot eat much, but can if he tries.

3. "**But I shall never keep it up!** In my present circumstances I might perhaps be able to do so—*e.g.*, while at school, or when enjoying a respite from my usual business occupations, etc., but not otherwise."

Answer. What of it? "Make hay while the sun shines." You will at least obtain a positive and immense good in the present. As for the future, can you promise yourself one at all? We should tell a brain-weary business man to feed and sleep as liberally as possible during his holiday. If he objected, "But I shall have to go back to my irregular fragments of meals in a week or two," we should reply: "All the more reason, then, for being regular while you can." This applies particularly to boys and girls at school, whose habits—good or bad—will be rapidly forming. For such it is of vital moment that evil propensities should be nipped in the bud by means of that Holy Table which God has prepared in their sight against those who afflict

them (Ps. xxii. 5). And if other good habits may be implanted in the young, why not that of frequent Communion also whenever it shall be possible to them afterwards? If in the case of children at school only 1 in 1,000 persevered, this itself would be a distinct gain, not to mention the immense positive good derived by the 999 during a critical period of their lives. At all events, it cannot be reasonably argued that the fact of having acquired a strong eucharistic habit in childhood *produces* a *contrary* habit afterwards. Perhaps it might be plausibly objected here that such reaction is precisely the result to be expected from overdoing young people with eucharistic piety. Such a contention, however, if urged concerning young children generally, and as a class, would show small deference to the experience of child-nature gathered by the Church during nineteen centuries of her divinely guarded existence, or to the prudence and foresight of our supreme spiritual guide on earth in recommending the practice—as he does to-day most emphatically—" even to younger children " [*etiam pueris*]. On the other side, if very frequent Communion should prove too burdensome —physically, mentally, or morally—in individual cases, and from accidental causes, why, the truth still remains that frequent and daily Communion is not a precept, but a counsel.

As to the alleged fact of younger children finding frequent Communion too great a tax upon them, it may well be doubted whether those

who have to deal spiritually with numbers of young *boys*, for instance, have so far found that these experience any sense of being overburdened and overdosed by Communions. Certainly this might happen if Rule 4 were to be ignored, and a preparation and thanksgiving were still to be exacted on the old rigoristic lines, and not—as the Holy See desires should be the case—"*according to the strength . . . of each.*"

Even slender facts are more convincing than theories in this matter. Here are one or two *known* instances of the working of frequent Communion in schools, as against the view that this practice will not survive during holidays. One boy, who would ordinarily have received Holy Communion once, or perhaps twice, during vacation-time, communicated three times a week. Another of like prior habits went to Communion once a week. Scanty facts to argue from! True; but they are straws showing which way the stream is beginning to flow: they illustrate the kind of *lasting* influence—all to the good—which frequent Communion practised in time of training and supervision may exert beyond it. Nevertheless, it will be difficult to judge fairly of results until an entirely new generation of future parents has been brought up in the sound eucharistic principles of which the Holy Father has so recently reminded us, and which he so earnestly desires to see frankly carried out, "*to the rejection of a contrary practice anywhere prevailing.*"

4. "**I am afraid of Holy Communion becoming a mere matter of routine.** Now, the Decree, in Rule 2, expressly mentions 'routine' as an impediment to frequent and daily Communion."

Answer. The "routine" objected to by the Holy See is obviously not the *mere habit of receiving*. For, if so, all fully acquired virtuous habits would be undesirable, inasmuch as they lead people to perform good acts easily and, as it were, as a matter of course. *Blameworthy* routine would be that which causes people to approach the rails in a *purely mechanical way*, without giving any reverent attention of mind to the great act they are engaged in. Again, mere lack of *devout feeling*, inability to shake off distractions, and like states of soul beyond our control, do not constitute "routine." Père Lintelo, in his pamphlet on the present subject, meets the objection we are considering much in the following way: "What would you think of me if I counselled you not to say your morning prayers every day, lest you should fall into routine? Our meals, too, become matters of 'routine' also. Yet if these were omitted for days the effects would soon make themselves felt." The principle underlying this method of reply is the old, old truth which we must never forget —that the Blessed Sacrament is worthily received and necessarily produces fruit in our souls if only we are in the state of grace, however dull the state of our souls or blunted our mental faculties. In our neurotic days, especially, lack of bodily food

in the early morning produces in many persons a kind of mental torpor, which ordinary effort does not suffice to alter in any material degree.

5. **" I have no time for frequent Communion."**

Answer. This plea *may* be a perfectly honest one ; it may also be but a feeble excuse. Let us examine it fairly. How can its sincerity be tested ? Well, if you can show that serious duties attaching to your state, profession, occupation, work, do *necessarily* interfere with your communicating so frequently, and that a little goodwill and earnestness, or a little more method in your daily plans, will not remove the difficulty, then there is nothing more to be said, whatever may be your spiritual loss. No doubt for very many the difficulty is insuperable. But if you can find time whenever you want it for an amusement—say for a ride in the park before breakfast—can you not sometimes find leisure for receiving our Lord ? Common experience shows that it is not always the *really* very busy people who " can spare no time," but rather those who put no order into their daily occupations, and so waste a lot of it.

6. **" This daily Communion is such a strain !"**

Answer. Of which sort ?—*moral and spiritual*, or *physical ?*

(1) *Physical Strain.*—For delicate people, certainly, it may be a strain, since it means that they have to go fasting to Mass and back. No doubt

one can be "penny wise and pound foolish" for oneself, or for children under one's charge in this matter, and in the long-run lose more Communions by lack of ordinary prudence. Or it may be that the physical effort—taken with important home or other duties—forms "the last straw," and leads to a breakdown.

Now, where a real duty obliges us, *optional* acts of piety which hinder its proper performance must give way. Commands come before counsels. But we should be consistent. We are not so if we find our health good enough for an effort when some excitement is on foot in the early morning, and only discover its pitiful weakness when Communion is in question.

(2) *Moral or Mental Strain.*—But why exert the *strain* at all? This is wholly unnecessary, in the light of the truth that, given the essential dispositions, *Sacraments benefit us of their own innate efficacy.* "But I like to receive with greater devotion!" Once a sick priest, who was dying, wished to put off the last Sacraments for one day upon this very ground. But the priest attending him replied: "Never mind about that. Receive with faith if you cannot with devotion." Are we seeking for emotion and spiritual experiences too much, as though the effect of our Lord's Sacrament depended upon such things? The remedy, then, is simple: *Don't* strain, but take things calmly and gently, according to your powers. You will not be the loser by this spiritually, and you will be the gainer mentally, and, in an indirect way, per-

haps physically as well. *Violent* concentration of mind and violent efforts at picturing our Lord's presence to ourselves—" trying to realize " Him, as we say—are injurious, and may lead to violent reaction and disgust afterwards.

7. **" I make no improvement by my frequent Communions."**

Answer. Do not think so much of the weak wretch you are *in spite of them*, but, rather, how much worse you would be *without* them. At the same time progress is not often perceptible at every step of its making, as, for instance, in the growth of a plant. Yet, if the effort to advance were to cease, the backward movement would soon show itself, as we see plainly when rowing against the stream or tide. And in the spiritual life we are *always* working against the strong current of our lower nature. Be this, however, as it may—be there progress in virtue or not—the infallible increase of grace in the soul produced by the Sacrament is always a gain in itself. It endears me more to God, entitles me to more abundant helps in times of temptation and trial, and secures me a richer reward in heaven for all eternity. Are such benefits to be despised because—through my not using the grace received in Communion as I ought and might—my faults are very slow in disappearing ?

APPENDIX I.

NON-FASTING COMMUNION FOR INVALIDS.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "LAID UP" OR "SICK" FOR A MONTH?

UNDER date March 25, 1907, the Sacred Congregation of the Council—answering a question as to the force of the above expression—declared that the dispensation was meant not merely "for those confined to their beds, but for those also who, while afflicted with serious sickness and unable, in the physician's opinion, to observe the natural fast, cannot, nevertheless, remain in bed, or else are able to rise for some hours during the day."

This explanation, however, does not expressly meet a somewhat common case, where the invalid suffering from a grave complaint, and judged unfit to remain fasting from midnight—or at least to rise without previous nourishment—desires to make, and with the aid of some liquid food is equal to making, the effort of going to a domestic chapel, or to some church or chapel close at hand, for Communion, instead of obliging the priest to bring the Blessed Sacrament. Nevertheless, it would seem that the dispensation may rightly be interpreted so as to include a meritorious person of this kind; for there is nothing in the

terms of the aforesaid authentic explanation which stipulates that the sick person must be wholly confined to his or her room, or even to the house absolutely. Moreover, the precise object of the Holy See in originally granting the dispensation was to facilitate in every way possible, and not to impede, frequent Communion in the case of invalids. Further, there is the general theological principle that when favours are granted these are to be interpreted in a larger rather than in a stricter and less favourable sense, where doubt arises as to their limits.

APPENDIX II.

ROME'S FRESH IMPULSE TO FREQUENT COMMUNION.

UNDER date April 10, 1907, the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, acting by command of the Sovereign Pontiff, addressed a circular letter to each member of the Catholic Episcopate, expressing the Holy Father's desire that a triduum of devotions be celebrated, if possible, in all cathedral churches every year, in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, either on the three days immediately following the Feast of Corpus Christi, or at some other time to be appointed by the ordinaries. The Holy Father also strongly recommends (*magnopere commendat*) that at least the devotions fixed for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi, and to be performed in cathedral churches, shall be held in other churches also—"according as the Bishop in his prudence and wisdom shall judge"—or else take place on some other Sunday during the year.

The motive underlying this desire of the Holy Father—namely, the promotion of daily Communion—is plainly set forth as follows: The numerous letters which have reached this Apostolic See from every side testify in a marked degree with how hearty a

welcome and with what immense joy the devout faithful have received the Decree on Daily Communion issued on December 20, 1905, by the Sacred Congregation of the Council; from them it may be gathered that this pious and most salutary practice has already begun to yield plentiful fruit, and that it will yield the same in still greater plenty among the Christian people in the future. Evidently so, for when the piety of men is growing cold, no more efficacious remedy, assuredly, can be devised for exciting the languishing hearts of Christians more powerfully to give to God a return of love than frequent and daily approach to Holy Communion, in which He is received who is the Fount of most ardent charity.

Wherefore the Sovereign Pontiff, who is overjoyed at the salutary fruit thus far derived, being extremely anxious that it should be maintained and, moreover, always continue to increase, has charged me with the duty of exhorting your lordship, and the Bishops of the whole Catholic world, that, persevering as they have begun, they should use every effort (*omnem impendant operam*) in order that the faithful may receive the Holy Eucharist frequently and even daily; for it is by means of this Divine banquet that their spiritual life is fed and prospers.

The Holy Father, moreover—judging that it will conduce greatly towards the said end if the Christian people offer a sweet violence to God by pouring out their earnest prayers in common—desires that every year, if possible (*in votis habet ut quotannis, si fieri poterit*), a triduum of supplication should be held in all cathedral churches within the Octave of the solemnity of Corpus Christi; or — should local or

personal circumstances require it—at some other period of the year, at the choice of the Most Reverend Bishops, following the plan here set down:

I. Let the devotions be performed always on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—either immediately following the Feast of Corpus Christi, or at another period, as stated above. On each of these days a sermon is to be given in which the people shall be instructed upon the excellence of the ineffable Sacrament of the Eucharist, and particularly upon the dispositions of soul for rightly receiving it. This done, let the Blessed Sacrament be then exposed, and the following prayer recited in its presence. Here follows a Latin prayer, "O dulcissime Jesu, qui in hunc mundum venisti," etc., of which we shall doubtless receive in due course an authorized translation. It will be enough here to notice that this new prayer is written on precisely the same lines as the former one, issued by Pope Pius X. (February, 1905), for the spread of daily Communion, with which many of our readers are no doubt familiar. Then, after the singing of the *Tantum Ergo*, Benediction is to be given to the people with the Blessed Sacrament.

II. On the Sunday, which will be the closing day of the aforesaid supplications, the parochial Mass will be celebrated as usual, at which, after the parish priest has delivered a homily on the Gospel appointed for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi, which is of a nature specially suited for an explanation of the Eucharistic mystery, the faithful will receive Communion in a body; or else, if some other Sunday be chosen outside the said Octave, in place of a homily upon the Gospel of the day, a discourse is to be given

to the people of a kind that will dispose them to receive the Eucharist at the same Mass with greater fervour.

In the afternoon the same service is to be repeated as was held on the preceding days. In the sermon, however, preachers are to urge the faithful to more fervent devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament, and especially to frequent participation in the heavenly banquet—according to the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism—as the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council already referred to notices under No. VI. Finally, the singing of the *Tantum Ergo* is to be preceded by the Hymn of St. Ambrose (*Te Deum*). And that it may be clear to all how ardent is the Sovereign Pontiff's desire to promote the practice of more frequent Communion, he strongly recommends that the same devout exercises as have been set forth above for performance in cathedral churches should take place in parish churches as well, either on the Sunday within the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi, or on some other Sunday in the year.

The letter then specifies the indulgences which His Holiness has attached to the aforesaid devotional exercises:

1. An indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines on each day of the exercises.

2. A plenary indulgence obtainable once during the triduum, on any day at the choice of each one, provided the person has piously attended the celebration on any one of the days (*qualibet die*), and has also, after expiating his sins by Confession, received Holy Communion, and prayed according to the intentions of His Holiness.

3. A plenary indulgence obtainable by all persons on the Sunday, who, having confessed, approach the Holy Eucharist in a body, either in cathedral or in parish churches, and who also offer prayers as previously stated.

APPENDIX III.

FREQUENT COMMUNION AND SCHOOL HOLIDAYS.

The abundant writings of Père Lintelo advocating frequent and daily Communion, according to the plainly expressed mind of our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., are perhaps less well known in this country than they deserve. "Les Vacances" (H. and L. Casterman: Tournai, Paris, Leipsic), a pamphlet of sixteen pages, appears to be one of the Belgian Jesuit's latest contributions to popular Eucharistic literature.

In its pages Père Lintelo discusses the ways and means for maintaining students during their holidays in the practice of frequent Communion, acquired by them during term-time. What can be done to strengthen scholars against various influences—incidental to vacation and to its larger freedom—which tend towards a falling-off in frequent or daily recourse to the Bread of Life? Such is the question debated after a most practical manner in "Les Vacances."

Among readers of this pamphlet people may possibly not be wanting who will deem some of the industries suggested by the writer hardly suitable to the English character, or at least to the peculiar genius of the average English schoolboy. The scheme proposed

may perhaps be regarded as too minutely systematic, except for youth of the Latin races. Yet all must admit Père Lintelo's brochure on this important matter to be, nevertheless, highly suggestive, and his insistence on this point may well set the minds of Catholic educators a-thinking as to how the substantive aim of the writer may best be secured amongst our young scholars of both sexes.

Of the desirability of frequent and even daily Communion in itself for every Catholic little need here be said. On this point there can no longer be two opinions among loyal subjects of the See of Peter. It is enough for such that the Vicar of Christ desires it—a fact made clear beyond cavil by recent pronouncements. He desires it for "all the faithful," for the naturally thoughtless young as much as, and if possible more than, for their reflective elders. Further, by his authority, the original declaration of his wishes, in December, 1905, was quickly followed by an "Answer" on the Communions of Children, which must thoroughly have disabused all doubters of the idea that the expression "all the faithful" was, somehow or other, not meant to include younger children who had just been duly admitted to their first Communion. Most keenly anxious for a revival throughout the Church of so salutary a practice, the Holy See naturally set about promoting it in the most solidly effective, because most radical, way—namely, by urging its adoption "especially" in "establishments for the training of youth of whatever kind."

All this being presupposed, we fancy that, at seasons when Catholic colleges and schools throughout the land send their scholars home by the hundreds for well-earned holidays, and perhaps not always into

surroundings most favourable to a fervent practice of religion, educators must be anxiously studying the problem of how to keep their *alumni* up to the standard of college practice, or nearly so, in the matter of frequent Communion.

One may, perhaps, be allowed to offer a practical suggestion, though in full consciousness that others rightly interested in this question may have thought of a better one. Would it not be possible in each school to open for the scholars a purely voluntary list of names for a "Holiday Communion League"? To give the plan more life, a medal of some sort—to be worn privately by each youthful "leaguer"—might be adopted as a token of their pious conspiracy. The leaguers would pledge themselves to receive Holy Communion, not merely on Sundays, or Holy Days of Obligation occurring during vacation, but at least, say, twice a week in addition. Of course, it would be made plain to the confederates that this was simply an agreement, neglect of which would entail no sin of any kind. Moreover, attention would be called to the two (and only two) essential conditions laid down by the Holy See for frequent and daily Communion—viz., (1) the state of grace, to be recovered, if unfortunately lost, by Confession, and (2) a right intention in approaching the Holy Table.

No doubt in every educational establishment there will be some students whose vacations must be spent at some distance from a church, so that Mass on week-days will be a difficulty, if not quite impossible; or else the church or chapel available may not afford the necessary facilities for carrying out the leaguer's self-imposed duty. There will, however, be not a few more favourably circumstanced for spirituals, and who

would be attracted and stimulated by the idea of being leagued with their schoolfellows in this way.

Another plan, and, if workable, perhaps a better one, as further removing all sense of moral pressure from school authorities, would be as follows: Let it be suggested to those students possessed of greater initiative that they gather round them a few companions of their own standing to join them in this holiday league.

It may be objected that while schoolgirls might readily enter into the spirit of such a confederacy, boys certainly would not "be bothered" with it. This, however, may well be doubted; at least, the experiment can be tried without damage to anyone. Even if only a very few joined the league there would always be something gained. Why should we despise small returns in spiritual business only? Example is infectious, especially with the young, and not by any means for evil only. Similarly with congregations. If only one or two members will have the courage to take up daily Communion in a parish to which the idea has hardly penetrated, and steel themselves against possible criticism, others will soon take heart and gradually rally round.

The force of fashion should not be undervalued in the present connexion. "What!" some one may exclaim, "go to Holy Communion out of fashion! Why, would not this constitute that very element of 'routine' which the Papal decree in Article 2 plainly declares to be a disqualification for frequent Communion?" To this it may be answered that "routine," in order to fall under condemnation, must form the real motive and mainspring of the act of Communion itself.

Theologians fully recognize the difference between

the predominant motive, which pervades an act in its very performance, and the motive, or occasion, which merely gives the first impulse to action, bringing a person to the point of deciding to perform the act—the latter being animated, when the time comes, by its own proper motive. Thus, for instance, I may have no intention of going to Confession. But a close friend comes along and says: "I'm going to the Sacraments. Won't you come with me?" And I consent, for mere companionship. Yet I duly prepare myself, and make a good Confession. The motive which brought me to the church falls into the background. It has done its work, and is not the one pervading my Confession, which is, on the contrary, a desire to obtain forgiveness of my sins.

So, too, the example of a few leading scholars may make a league of the kind suggested popular, and yet those who yield to the fashion may make excellent Communions for all that.

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